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ABSTRACT

This short paper outlines the basic theoretical approach which the Information System for Vocational Decisions (ISVD) developers are using to solve the problem of how people learn about careers, i.e. the cognitive aspects of occupational guidance. The emphasis is on the vocational developmental process, the gradual acquisition of knowledge about the world of work, of knowledge about the student's own vocational potential, and the increasingly clear understanding of how this potential is fulfilled through school and work. The vocational learning sequence is outlined including such elements as: (1) learning and vocational readiness; (2) the learning situation; (3) vocational cues; and (4) symbolization in the vocational learning process. In essence, the author sees vocational development as a learning process, and fits the vocational counselor's role within the broader role of teacher. He must understand learning and how to facilitate it. (TL)

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A THEORETICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE USE OF OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION IN GUIDANCE

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Introduction

Career development is a process. Students are engaged in this process and the subject matter in school is either directly or indirectly related to their career development. Many of the relationships are obvious as in the case of shop courses. Others are not quite so clear as in the case of World History. This paper takes the position that successful consideration of vocational developmental tasks will function either directly or indirectly as an integrating factor in the personalities of our youth. The emphasis here is on the vocational developmental process, the gradual acquisition of knowledge about the world of work, of knowledge about the student's own vocational potential, and the increasingly clear understanding of how this potential is fulfilled through school and work. For most students, the academic identity is a developmental stage, while the vocational identity in our culture is the principal identity perfecting the natural human personality.

In our theoretical approaches to career development we have overlooked a simple fact - that boys and girls learn how to be doctors, lawyers, plumbers, and nurses. As we look at them learning about the world of work, we become aware that their learning is

somewhat like the traditional learning and somewhat different from it. The example which illustrates this arises from two factual statements. The first statement is $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$. The second statement is: A great many men with degrees in forestry work indoors at desks.

I imagine that I am teaching a group of boys age 15. Two of these boys are thinking of becoming foresters. My nine o'clock class is in geometry. I teach $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$. The boys learn this. It is a kind of pure intellectual learning, an abstraction that is apart from life. At 9:50 I teach a course in occupations. In the place of $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$ I write, "A great many men with college degrees in forestry work indoors at desks." For the two boys considering forestry this is not abstract. It is concrete--it is probably new, and it may be shocking. It may have an effect on the core of the budding occupational identity that is beginning to provide personal integration. But there is a core of cognitive material here that must be grasped by the students. To make intelligent decisions they must have learned about careers.

This short paper will outline the basic theoretical approach to this problem which we are using. We have not abandoned affective elements, but we think that in recent years there has been such a concentration on affective elements that a researched understanding of cognitive approaches has been neglected.

The paper will outline some of the elements involved in the vocational learning sequence. It will discuss cognitive change which we expect will be motivational, and lead to behavior change.

Learning and Vocational Readiness

Readiness is a term used in learning theory. It is important to remember that vocational readiness can exist in differing kinds and degrees at every stage of choice and adjustment in the career development process.

Readiness depends on need. The vocational needs we are talking about are "acquired needs." They are a part of the American way of life, but vocational development, as we view it in the United States, is not an aspect of the development of boys and girls in every culture in the world.

Needs in the area of vocational development are developed through a socializing process. Since we are all socialized in different ways our states of vocational readiness will vary greatly. Even within some subcultures in the U. S. the question, "What will you do when you grow up?", asked in a career development context, may have no meaning because within that subculture careers are unknown--there are only ways of life which working supports.

This socially created state of readiness controls the expectations one has for "what is likely to lead to what." For example, an aspect of vocational readiness is the awareness on the part of the child that open consideration of career choices may lead to social approval from parents, counselors, teachers, and adults in general.

The vocational learner's expectations control or greatly influence (1) the amount of attention paid to a given vocational

situation, (2) the aspects he will notice or respond to, and (3) the nature of the response. Grunes' (1956) research on the socially molded perception of job classifications is an example of this.

Need and readiness will determine how the student interprets the situation. Need and readiness will determine if, when, and how he will respond. If a student does not feel hungry, it is likely that he will not notice in any effectual way, ads for food. If a student is not vocationally hungry, he will not notice the job world. The vocational learning situation must provide objects, people, and activities with which the learner interacts.

All vocational learning is a function of motivation. The student acts to satisfy his vocational needs. Unless he has a vocational need, he will not pursue a course of action, nor will there be any vocational learning. The presence or absence of vocational need determines whether or not vocational action will result in a given situation. When we talk about vocational need, we mean that there is present a state of dissatisfaction in the student. The action resulting from this state is an effort to produce a state of vocational satisfaction. The quality and quantity of the dissatisfaction will determine the extent of the vocational activity of the student. The vocational responses of the student are determined by the nature of the situation and by the learner's condition of vocational readiness.

A major problem in the elementary and secondary school years is the creation of goal directedness. Involvement in the world of

work at these early grade levels is minimal. The consequences of needing, noticing, and responding, are seldom very great. As a result, even the needing, noticing, and responding are diminished.

The author of this paper takes the position that since the vocational problem is generally posed in educational terms and unrelated to the vocational world during this time, and since secondly, the real vocational problems are extremely remote, the guidance personnel have an obligation to impose a formal learning situation with formal academic sanctions in order to create the goal directedness necessary for increased understanding of the world of work, and the numerous responses to it that are possible. We need to create situations in which the learner feels the consequences of decisions which he makes. The decisions are academic; the consequences are not merely academic, but achieve the ultimate goal of the counselor in expanding the occupational horizons of the student. Thus, with achievement of academic satisfaction, the student achieves simultaneously vocational satisfaction in that he has broadened his knowledge and understanding, and feels less tension in the vague and indistinct vocational situation which elementary and secondary education necessarily place him in.

The Learning Situation

The second element in the vocational learning process is the learning situation. The learning situation is always a problem for the learner. In our culture the problem is made doubly difficult

by its remoteness. We are speaking here of remoteness in time. For the college bound boy, vocational satisfaction, that is, satisfaction deriving from learning new work responses, is postponed for years. Since satisfaction is remote the acuteness of perception of the problem is diminished precisely in its vocational terms.

At this point, the writer finds himself in a relatively paradoxical intellectual position. He feels constrained to urge the adoption of positive steps to create intermediate work satisfactions in order to increase the motivational power of the remote vocational goal. In doing so he would tend to advocate the development of a vocationally oriented academic identity.

On the other hand there is the awareness that those scholars who pursue humanistic studies for their own sake, who participate in the pursuit of truth alone, who delight in its acquisition, who become stardusty with ideas and feel the deep throb of human striving pulsing through nations and centuries - these scholars and their students may feel no tension. Their absorption in the academic identity is so great that the vocational problem not only becomes remote, it ceases to exist. We call these college years a moratorium, from the Latin word mora meaning delay, but to call this a delay is a value laden description. For at least in theory there is no delay. Rather, in terms of the academic identity, this is the springing time of the year, when there is a pure lyric quality about the wild intellectual enthusiasms of youth that helps to perfect the essential individualistic academic identity.

But for most of those we educate in this fashion, entrance into the world of work comes as a shock.

To give the vocational devil his due, there has been a "delay" and the delay has involved what the fledgling academic now discovers is the principle identity in twentieth century America - the vocational identity.

But the paradox must be resolved. We must make a unity of antinomies. At the very least we must build bridges from the academic world to the world of work. In school and college the problem of learning new intellectual facts is posed every day. The vocational choice problem is not posed every day. The choice of a course of study which may take place in March or April or May is remote from the academic behavior which must be successfully carried on in September, October, and November. The choice will not lead to satisfaction at once. Even for such minor vocational decisions satisfaction is delayed two, three, or even five months because this is the way the academic world is structured.

Vocational Cues

Further, the problem of learning new intellectual facts is set in a structured framework - a formal learning situation, but vocational learning is seldom so structured. The learning problem, the need for choice is posed at each educational-vocational level, but there is no provision for formal learning of the variety of responses.

Vocational readiness is the disposition to act in a certain way based on prior knowledge and observation. The student of

vocational matters will have expectations that determine his attention. Those aspects of the vocational problem which attract his attention, we call vocational cues. Thus, vocational readiness involves readiness to interpret and respond to available vocational cues. The best vocational learning situation will be one in which the cues are in conformity with the student's state of readiness. At the outset, cues which the vocational student expects, are most suitable to him.

In addition, vocational cues must be such that the learner can distinguish those that are important to him from those that are unimportant. The cues must, therefore, be distinctive.

As the student grows older, vocational cues need to be patterned. In the earlier years, we may accept as his normal development a relatively simple approach in terms of likes or dislikes. But career development is a far more complex thing. Thus, in the later years of adolescent development, the simple assertion of likes or dislikes may signify immaturity. For such people, it is extremely crucial that the complex nature of career development be presented in a patterned, and thus more vocationally significant, fashion in order that the complexity of the situation may be grasped. The adolescent should be helped to perceive the relationship among variables involved in career development; for example, aptitudes, interests, and values. He must be helped to understand the notions of: relative importance, compromise, irreversibility, synthesis, and developmental process itself.

The world of work does not itself very often contribute to this kind of patterning. It presents with equal force to a young adolescent both appropriate and inappropriate vocational cues. If, for example, we were simply to throw the whole Dictionary of Occupational Titles at a student, he might get the impression of one "big bloomin' buzzin' confusion." If, however, we make entry to this vast storehouse of information through those areas in which he manifests some degree of readiness, we can by sequencing the steps of his approach, assist him in understanding and imposing some increased degree of rationality upon his study of his own vocational development.

When the vocational learning situation is not structured in formal fashion, the vocatinnal responses will be less intellectual, less rational, more haphazard, more subject to trial and error. This is where we find the majority of our juniors and seniors in college. The nation does not benefit by such a neglect of its resources.

Symbolization

In the third stage in the vocational learning process the learner interprets the situation. Interpretation is both cognitive and emotive. Tiedeman and O'Hara (1963) have dealt with the interpretation of the vocational learning situation in terms of differentiation and integration. There is no need to deal with those aspects of the process here. But a kind of cognitive interpretation which simultaneously deals with emotive interpretation is symbolization. It is precisely here that the role of the counselor and the teacher of

occupations enters.

Most psychologists stress the need for symbolization in affecting psychological growth and development. The chief mode of symbolization for human beings is through words, although any sign at all can be a symbol. Madison Avenue has capitalized on attention-getting symbols to characterize the qualities of their products. But words are the most common cues whereby we understand our environment. Through words we come to differentiate and integrate the world around us. Differentiation is more easily achieved the more words we know. Integration is more easily achieved the more words we know. And yet, although this principle of learning is generally accepted in education and psychology, no one has used it as yet to put theoretical foundation beneath that aspect of guidance called occupational information.

The more occupational words a student knows, the more he will be able to differentiate and integrate within the occupational world. He must learn the language of vocations. He must use words, symbols, to explore vicariously the world of work, to talk out and act out with his friends, with parents, teachers, and counselors, vocational roles which he may be considering. In general, the more he does this, the better able he will be to differentiate and integrate. It is precisely this principle that vocational psychologists have neglected. Under the impact of increased awareness of the interaction of personality with vocational development, they have failed to hold on to the fundamental conception of learning as a part of vocational

development. Abandonment was furthered by an awareness that much of the occupational information that was available was quickly outdated.

But for the growing and developing boy or girl, the value of the information does not lie in its up-to-dateness, but in its capacity to lead to an increased understanding of career development in the world of work. This understanding comes about principally through the manipulation and study of the symbols of that world. Therefore, we must not only use words as a principal focus, but following Madison Avenue's true understanding of the way people learn and become aware of reality, we must use all kinds of symbols, pictorial and auditory, as well as verbal.

Conclusion

If, as vocational counselors, we are going to assist the vocational development of our students in such a way as to produce vocational maturity, then we are inevitably going to be involved in a learning process. We know a great deal about learning, but we have not applied it in the vocational area.

Without information, the vocational learner's responses tend to follow habitual, inadequate patterns. The introduction of knowledge, cracks the mold of some of these patterns, and thus shifts the expectations and consequences which result from vocational activity.

If we teach the student to make increasingly more adequate vocational differentiations and integrations, then our theory says

that the result will be more adequate vocational responses. If we do not provide the student with some kind of occupational and career information, the range of possible responses will not be open to him. He will be a vocationally deprived child. Guidance counselors must intervene in the habitual perception of the vocational world, to broaden that perception, to open up the number of options available, and to have each option clear, distinct and patterned in accordance with the unique interests, abilities, and values of the student.

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